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ABSTRACT

To aid communities with similar concerns, this bulletin shares the proceedings of a workshop which focused on local issues surrounding rural crime and its prevention. Eight members of the Fairfield County (Ohio) Resource Development Committee assessed the need for and support of a workshop, invited speakers, scheduled a meeting place, printed an agenda, and wrote newspaper publicity articles; 32 participants were recruited representing local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, juvenile court, law enforcement departments, churches, and all elementary and secondary schools. These participants represented two separate interests--lay persons and school teachers. Teachers' discussions emphasized the schools (especially grades 4-8) as a relevant mechanism to address the rural crime problem and reviewed available teacher's guides, while the lay oriented discussions focused on identifying the nature and scope of county crime problems and what the county, community, and individual property owners can do to prevent or reduce crime. Evaluation of the workshop by 24 participants revealed that 46% rated its overall helpfulness as excellent and 46% rated it as good. As a result of the workshop, "hopes" for the future are that the entire community can be motivated, that community leaders can be made more aware of crime prevention, that school programs will be implemented, and that a crime prevention program will be initiated in Fairfield County. (NEC)

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Rural Crime Prevention Workshop – A Sharing of Ideas

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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On April 25, 1979, a workshop was held in Fairfield County, Ohio. The purpose for the workshop was to focus on local concerns surrounding rural crime and its prevention. The idea was born and cultivated by local residents. It was their perception that a problem existed and their initiative that the time to confront it was now.

The purpose underlying this bulletin is to share the proceedings of that workshop with others whose perceptions or interests are parallel. Our intent is to aid and abet, not direct, others' efforts. We acknowledge the unique characteristics, in terms of problems, resources, etc., inherent to each community, and have, therefore focused the message of this bulletin around one specific workshop.

There is no universal formula. A meaningful effort will result only when the local residents perceive their situation as a problem and input, voluntarily, strategies at the individual, familial and community levels, to resolve their local issues.

A MEANS, NOT AN END

A crime prevention workshop can be viewed as one link in a sequence of events designed to achieve a socially desirable goal -- improving life in our communities. It is neither an end in and of itself nor the final and determining means to accomplishing an end. It is merely one link. The test of the workshop's success is ultimately measured in its capacity to generate further and more specialized activities. Are the community residents prepared and motivated to take the next step?

In Fairfield County, the Resource Development Committee already has adopted plans to discuss during their next monthly meeting, methods for

implementing local crime prevention programs. One supervisor of schools in Fairfield County has requested 135 copies of the Rural Crime Prevention Guide For Young People with plans of incorporating the course within local schools. A follow-up newspaper article summarizing the workshop proceedings is being written to further inform local residents. These are the kinds of actions, initiated by concerned citizens, which indicate a commitment to begin work on bringing crime prevention programs to the Fairfield County community.

PLANNING THE WORKSHOP

The following is a chronology of events which culminated in the holding of the workshop in Fairfield County, Ohio.

1. Identifying the Problem and a Need for Purposive Collection Action

The Fairfield County Resource Development Committee is a group dedicated to improving life in the local community. During one of their recent monthly meetings, crime was identified as a problem increasingly affecting local residents. The problem as perceived by committee members: 1) largely involved youth, and 2) was not confined to Lancaster, the county's largest city, but reached out into the county's rural areas and small towns.

A subcommittee of eight members was formed. It was their task to decide what action, if any, should be taken. A workshop was conceived as a viable means to assemble a cross-sectional group of county residents for purposes of discussing crime prevention.

Between the first and second meetings, local community leaders, law enforcement officials, and school superintendents were contacted. They were asked if the community had a need to hold and would support such a gathering, and if so, would they support it. Such a step was important for it widened and strengthened the support base for scheduling a workshop.

2. Reinforcing the Need for a Workshop and Formulating Plans

The subcommittee's second meeting served to reinforce members on the need for holding a workshop. A tally of the verbal support obtained from county public leaders was shared. Conversations with public officials seemed to indicate agreement with the committee's perceptions of the local problem and a need to organize a county awareness workshop.

Outside resource persons were invited to attend this second meeting. In addition to presenting information on the Ohio rural crime problem, discussion centered on crime prevention programs and agencies available within the state which could aid Fairfield County during evolution of their local objectives. The consultation proved valuable, for it : 1) served to input background information, 2) provided an opportunity to compare Fairfield County's situation within the context of the larger society, and 3) made the committee aware that they need not begin from scratch but might instead draw from the successes and shortcomings experienced by similar community projects.

It was during this second meeting when tentative plans for the workshop's agenda and audience were mapped. Since the workshop was intended to inform a cross-sectional group within the county, representatives were invited from businesses, Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, juvenile court, law enforcement departments, and churches.

As the juvenile problem was considered a vital issue, representatives from all area schools, at both the elementary and secondary levels, were urged to attend. A newspaper article served to make local residents cognizant of the workshop.

Responsibilities for the details were assigned to individual committee members (inviting speakers, contacting local participants, scheduling a meeting place, printing the agenda, writing the newspaper article, bringing audio-visual equipment, etc.). The meeting date was set to avoid conflict with other county organizational activities.

3. Finalizing Plans

A third meeting was held to review, coordinate, and finalize plans.

THE EVENT

A copy of the agenda is provided and explains the theme and flow of the workshop proceedings (Fig. 1). A brief abstract of each activitiy follows the listing of time, title and speakers' names.

Figures 2 and 3 are samples of handouts used to assist residents during discussion periods. As the 10:10 a.m. activitiy consisted of breaking up into small groups, the handout provided: 1) a structure to guide discussion through a limited time period, and 2) a means to collect and assimilate group thoughts on similar topics during a feedback session.

As workshop participants represented principally two separate interests, i.e. lay persons and school teachers, two separate discussion periods were scheduled at 2:00 p.m. Figure 3 is a sample of the handout distributed to lay members.

Topics for the school teachers' discussion included emphasis on: 1) the schools as a relevant mechanism to address the rural crime problem, 2) a review of a teacher's guide entitled, Rural Crime Prevention Guide for Young People (Wurschmidt, et al., 1978), and 3) a discussion of other available and valuable educational guides. The discussion focused on grades 4-8.

The day was concluded with distribution of an evaluation form, soliciting feedback from the workshop participants (Fig. 4).

WORKSHOP SPONSORED BY:

Fairfield County Resource Development Committee in Cooperation with:

- Fairfield County Schools
- Lancaster City Schools
- Ohio University-Lancaster
- Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, OSU
- Rural Crime Prevention Center OSU
- Ohio Division of Crime Prevention
- Ohio Crime Prevention Association
- Fairfield County Sheriff's Department
- Lancaster Police Department

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

CRIME PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Wednesday, April 25, 1979

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ohio University-Lancaster

Room 211

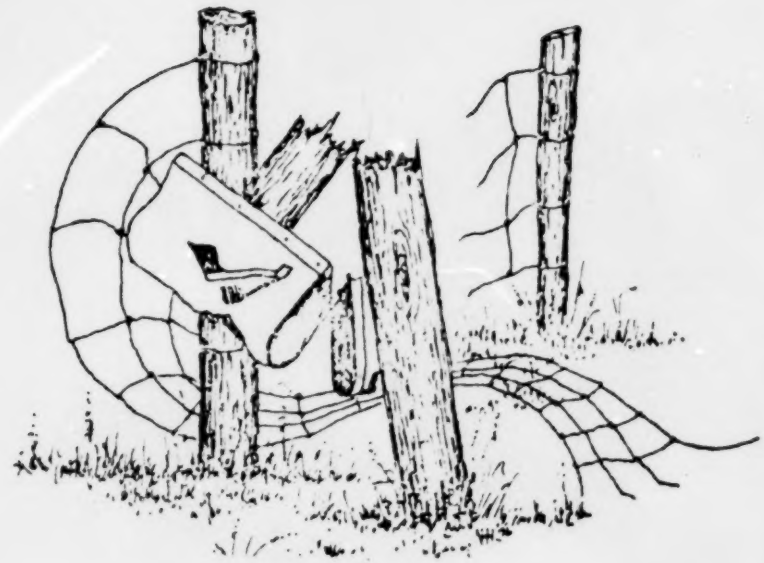

Figure 1

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CRIME PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Wednesday, April 25, 1979
Ohio University-Lancaster
Room 211

9:00 Chairperson - Mrs. Ida Marie Neeley

9:10 Nature and Scope of the Crime Problem -
Dr. G. Howard Phillips, Director,
Rural Crime Prevention Center, OSU

The discussion will identify the leading crime occurring in Ohio as reported in four statewide studies. Such questions as who is committing the crimes, why people don't report crimes, why criminals say they commit crimes, and finally other related questions to this topic will be discussed.

10:00 Break

10:10 Small group discussions - Al Pugh, Extension Sociologist Community Resources Development, OSU

Causes and Consequences - What is the problem in Fairfield County?

The participants will be divided into groups of five to seven members in order that they might discuss the relevency of these studies to the situation in Fairfield County. The identification of potential problem areas should be useful in discussing the problems and potential solutions throughout the day.

10:40 Feedback Session - Al Pugh

11:00 What is Being Done?

Local Sheriff Department and Local Police Department

A discussion of programs and activities provided by the local law enforcement authorities.

11:30 What Can Be Done? - Dr. Edmund G. James, Director, Ohio Division of Crime Prevention, and Steven D. Gladman, Executive Director, Ohio Crime Prevention Association.

A discussion by a representative of the Ohio Division of Crime Prevention and the Ohio Crime Prevention Association in terms of programs offered by their respective organizations.

12:15 Lunch

1:15 What Other Communities Are Doing - Dr. G. Howard Phillips

School Programs - Mr. John Stofer, Wayne County
Teacher Youth Groups: 4-H, FFA, Church, etc.
Civic Groups
Youth

2:00 A - Youth Leaders' Discussion Group

What Should We Do? - Rev. Sturm, Ministerial Association of Fairfield County

Small Group Discussion

What Action if Any

3:00 Feedback Session - Rev. Sturm

3:30 Adjourn

2:00 B - School Personnel Discussion Group

Designing a Crime Prevention Program for Schools -
Dr. G. Howard Phillips
Mr. John Stofer
Mr. Todd Wurschmidt
Rural Crime Prevention Center

3:30 Adjourn

Figure 1 (Con't.)

Figure 2

CRIME PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Fairfield County

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. The overwhelming types of crimes in Ohio are property oriented. Vandalism leads the list with different forms of thievery second. Would you concur that the situation in Fairfield County is similar or different? Discuss - what, how and in what way?

2. Teenagers and youths are the most arrested persons in rural Ohio. Is the problem in Fairfield County similar? Different? Talk about such things as: Who is causing the problem? Where do they live? Age groups, etc.

3. What other points do you think are important in understanding the nature and scope of the crime problems in Fairfield County?

Figure 3

CRIME PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Fairfield County

A. Youth Leaders - Chairman Rev. Harold R. Sturm

Resource People - Dr. Edmund G. James
Mr. Steven D. Gladman
Mr. Al Pugh
Representative - Sheriff and local Police Department

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is being done to prevent acts of crime in Fairfield County?

2. What can property owners do to prevent or reduce crime in Fairfield County?

3. What can the community do to reduce crime in Fairfield County?

Figure 4

E V A L U A T I O N

Crime Program for Fairfield County
April 25, 1979

1. How would you rate the overall helpfulness of the workshop. (Circle)

Poor									Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. What do you feel were the most helpful sessions, presentations, and/or discussions in the workshop?

3. Other comments:

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The following is a summary of what the workshop participants felt constituted Fairfield County's crime problem.

Most participants felt vandalism was the most common crime committed in Fairfield County, with thievery being second. This was seen as a trend similar to rural Ohio. The patrolman from the Lancaster Police Department explained the four most common crimes involving his agency, in order of frequency, were: auto offenses, family fights, vandalism, and shoplifting. Other comments included:

- vandalism most often committed when youth were in groups, not alone,
- vandalistic acts tend to be unreported,
- property most often vandalized involved school property, mailboxes, excavated buildings, and graffiti on public and private property,
- juvenile courts not able to effectively deal with juveniles when arrested for vandalistic acts. Ohio law not strong enough to deal with major juvenile problems,

- theft of property was the most expensive crime to the community,
- theft of gasoline viewed as "typical occurrence,"
- stolen property often involved shoplifting, and
- the motivating factor was usually money (eg. to use for pleasure seeking).

The majority of the participants felt teenagers were most often responsible for crime in Fairfield County, a trend similar to rural Ohio. Participants felt 14-18 year olds were the age group most responsible for youth crime. Some members felt 10-14 year olds were getting more heavily involved. The youngsters were believed to be members of the local community, not outsiders. Young females were viewed as today being involved more often.

The need to channel youth energy into positive directions, such as involvement in programs like OWE was mentioned. A greater need for adult (parent and teacher) role modeling was suggested. Children needed

to become more conscious of the consequences of their involvement in crime.

Some of the causes mentioned as contributing to the local juvenile crime problem were:

- teenagers used to being entertained and not entertaining themselves,
- youth lack of involvement in constructive outside activities, such as school, church, and sports,
- child's lack of self-identity and a feeling of personal worth,
- growing use of drugs and use of drugs by younger age groups (one group did not feel important cause in Fairfield County),
- youth affluence,
- increased ease of mobility,
- retaliation against school and educators,

- lack of parental supervision and discipline,
- need for both parents to work,
- family and home problems,
- families renting property, with parents not placing much importance on the value of the property, and

- lack of full-time police in some communities.

EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Of the 32 individuals participating in the workshop, 24 evaluated the workshop. The first evaluation question requested the participants rate the overall helpfulness of the day's proceedings on a scale of 1-10, with 10 equivalent to an excellent rating. The following is a summary:

Rating	Scale	# Rating	Percent
Excellent	9-10	11	46
Good	7-8	11	46
Fair	5-6	2	8
Poor	1-4	0	0
Total		24	100

Participants were then asked, "What do you feel were the most helpful sessions, presentations, and/or discussions in the workshop?"

The following are the positive comments received as broken down by agenda categories.

# Commenting	Comments
7	Enjoyed the Fairfield Co. law enforcement officals' talk and learning about their side of the story.
7	Found the information presented by Dr. Phillips on the nature and scope of the problem very enlightening.
7	Felt the previewing of the Teacher's Guide was most relevant to local school curriculum needs.
5	Appreciated receiving crime prevention bulletins, brochures and materials handed out during the workshop.
4	Felt the time spent in small group discussions focusing on Fairfield Co. problems and possible solutions was most helpful.
4	Thought the information on crime prevention programs and what other communities are doing was most helpful.
2	Appreciated the efforts and participation by professional people.

All the participants said they benefitted and enjoyed some portion of the program. However, a few critical and useful suggestions were offered:

- more time should have been allocated for the Fairfield Co. law enforcement officials' talk,
- thought it was difficult discussing Fairfield Co.'s problem when specifics about the problem were not known,
- had a problem dealing with the statistics,
- felt the school discussion centered at the elementary grade level, even though high school teachers were invited to attend, and
- would have liked more time devoted to group discussion and the answering of questions.

Several participants expressed "hopes" for the future. The following are comments received:

- hope entire community can be motivated,
- hope more community leaders can be made more aware of crime prevention,
- hope public can be made more aware so that "positive reporting will encourage confidence in the solutions,"

- hope school program will be implemented.
- hope crime prevention programs will be initiated with Fairfield County, and
- hope workshop will be made available to as many people as possible.

PARTICIPANTS BY ORGANIZATION

The following is a list of organizations and agencies represented at the workshop:

American Association of University Women (2)
County Ministerial Association
Farmers and Citizen Bank
Fairfield Co. Resource Development Commission (2)
USDA-ASCS Office
Lancaster Area Chamber of Commerce
169 Board
Lancaster Quota Club
Fairfield County Juvenile Court
Business and Professional Women
Parent Effectiveness Training Programs
Pickerington Police Department

Lancaster City Schools - Technical Education
Bloom-Carroll Schools
Lancaster City Schools West (2)
Lancaster City Schools Medill (3)
Liberty Union High School
West Elementary, Lancaster
Pickerington High School (2)
Fairfield School for Boys
Fairfield County Schools (2)
Millersport High School
A-C High School

RELEVANT AND RELATED ISSUES

1. The Problem

Rural Crime is increasingly becoming a "manifest" problem for our rural communities. Traditionally believed to be a social ill confined within city boundaries, crime in the country was perceived as quite manageable within the reigns of authority assigned our police and judicial resources. For a multiplicity of reasons, the level and pervasiveness of rural crime has increased dramatically (Uniform Crime Reports, 1967-76). So dramatically, that farmers now find the need to incorporate equipment and supply losses into annual operating budgets, police find their daily routines consumed by auto offenses and domestic fights, and schools feel pressures to include curriculums on crime. The temper of the time presses for a change in rural lifestyle.

We are presently in a process of rethinking our strategies. Rural community members are becoming increasingly aware that "protection of your property is your responsibility." We can no longer delegate the responsibility solely to others.

The vast majority of rural crimes are crimes against property (Phillips, 1979). The vast majority are crimes of opportunity. The vast majority are committed by "typical" youth (Phillips, et al., 1976). Responsibility, then, becomes ours: to protect our property; to lessen opportunities; and to become more apprised of our children's actions.

2. Why Plan a Rural Crime Prevention Workshop?

Most rural residents today sense the appearance and growth of the rural crime problem. If they have not themselves been a victim of some

crime, they will perhaps have a neighbor, friend or relative who has shouldered the experience. Literature from a local prevention program, or magazine or television new's story may have made them aware. Perhaps their children have had related encounters at school. So, the purpose for gathering the group together is not so much to ask, "Do we have a crime problem?" but more urgently, "How bad of a crime problem do we have?" and "What can be done?"

It is the scope of the rural crime problem which draws our anxious eye. Most of us residing in rural communities are not aware of the sudden magnitude of the problem and the disconcerting social trend it indicates. The automobile exhaust from our vega, pinto or cadillac does not emit fumes at a level detrimental to our global ecology. But, when the accumulation of fumes emitted from the tailpipes of so many thousands of cars is sum totalled, the effects are deleterious. Analogous issues are plentiful. The point is to view the scope of the problem not on an individual basis, but within a social framework. Together, we have a problem and a problem climbing toward pandemic proportion.

One participant from the Fairfield County Juvenile Courts shared an interesting thought which might serve to exemplify the need we have to share our isolated experiences. It was his contention that we, as adults, parents and teachers, view the actions of "kids" in a lighter vein than those of our contemporaries. We are often quick to excuse a teenager caught stealing candy or playing hooky from school. We hesitate calling the police for fear of establishing an indelible black mark.

With this in mind, arrangements were made with the Fairfield County court system that incidences involving juveniles suspected of committing minor offenses would be reported and recorded at the court. If a youngster

was apprehended, a patrolman need only call the court for a summary of past offenses. Only if the immediate situation and past record warranted, would the youth be taken into custody. The compromise provided an informal means to communicate to others isolated episodes.

In an analogous fashion, the mileau provided by a local workshop is important if we are to avoid isolating our level of awareness within the boundaries of our backyard fence lines. It is here, where ideas and experiences can constructively be shared.

3. Is Crime Prevention a Viable Concept?

Prevention is a difficult concept to market. We are accustomed to laws of cause and effect. The sequence from introduction of certain kinds of behavior to the witnessing of subsequent events strongly support our inclination to attribute the effect of the latter as caused or produced by the former. Experience has convinced us, for example, if we apply the brakes (given due consideration to model and maintenance) our car will stop. We know if, at 10,000 feet, our parachute fails to open, the superiority of our life insurance policy will not soften our fall (although, the fall of our relatives, perhaps). We can not directly see the benefits of using crime prevention measures. We will not know, on an individual basis, if practicing crime prevention is the cause for our not becoming a victim of crime.

But, prevention is neither a new concept nor an idea void of logic. Abstaining from cigarette smoking is no guarantee of immunity from lung cancer. Wearing a football helmet is no guarantee we will not sustain a related head injury. But, if we examine the effects of these kinds of

behavior on a collective basis, trends can be observed. The impact becomes more convincing when we look at the effects on a social level.

In addition, we must do prevention. This is to say, prevention requires action. We can, on occasion, prevent some undesirable occurrences if we refrain from doing some things. Although to accomplish the effect we must consciously exert an effort to refrain, the refrain is more a passive exertion. As we move to adopt the prevention concept to the rural crime problem, an active exertion or participation is required.

Thirdly, prevention requires we take some action before the fact. The common noun used to describe this effort is proaction. Our law enforcement agencies, for example, function on the principle of reaction. A crime occurs and the police or sheriff's department is involved to react to or solve the situation. Only within the last few years have the duties of policing embraced the proactive concept of crime prevention.

Now, we are moving in the direction of involving our rural communities in this effort. Crime prevention can be performed on an individual, familial, and/or community level, and indeed will sustain its greatest effectiveness when performed on a collective social basis.

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